



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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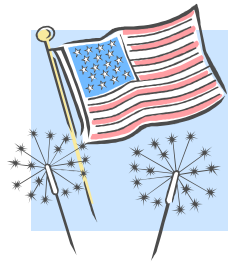
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by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

OVERVIEW

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY! Go celebrate our independence and fish!
See page 7 for details about four dozen 'former' NY subway cars being added to
Blackfish Bank Reef.



Fishing Pictures



From Jerry Thrash at Queen's Creek Outfitter.

THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

Donna at Captain Bobs reports fishing has been great for the past few days. The weather has been just about perfect with minimal winds, low temperatures, and the tides falling at the right time of day. While the throwback ratio is rising, keeper flounder are still being landed by boaters in front in Tom's Cove, and off of the piers. Queen's Sound and Cockle Creek have also been productive, with anglers catching there limits of keepers in relatively short time spans. Kingfish are keeping anglers busy at Markers 15 and 16, with croaker mixed in. Staff is still waiting for the big numbers of croaker to arrive. Small weakfish are arriving, and small spot have been caught. Shark and skate are also providing action for anglers in the area. Offshore fishing is hot! The 20-Fathom line (around the Lumpy Bottom and the Parking Lot) is producing bluefin tuna, and trolling has been best method to bring them up. Other offshore catches include mahi-mahi, cobia, king mackerel, spadefish, sheepshead and tautog at the wrecks.

Wachapreague

At Captain Zed's, the MARLIN MAGIC came in with a 102-pound bluefin tuna and two small dolphin on the 28th. Anglers have been catching kingfish, grey trout, and a keeper flounder (the throwback ratio is 30-40 undersized flounder to one keeper). Staff reports the price of gasoline is keeping many anglers home.

Onancock

In Onancock, medium and large croaker are being hooked at the mouth of the Pocomoke Sound, and few flounder are still being hooked. Anglers can catch spot with bloodworms, and nice sea mullet have been found in the area. Sharks are beginning to show, and Captain Wil expects more to show up by the middle of July. During hot times of day, anglers should fish in deeper waters, and during evenings, in the shallows. Nice fishing and good weather should make a great holiday weekend.

Cape Charles

Chris at Chris' Bait and Tackle reports a drop in citations this week. Flounder are still being reported from the Cell area, and spadefish have been brought in from the same area and the 3rd and 4th islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Croaker have arrived at Oyster, and anglers are coming home with full coolers. There is a mixed bag of bottom fish available off of the Kiptopeke Pier including croaker, spot, and a few small grey trout.

Flounder have been caught near Cherrystone Bait and Tackle. Anglers have found success fishing at low tide around Kings Creek. Croaker, grey trout, and white perch have also been hooked in the area.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

No citations were reported from Cobb's Marina this week. Anglers have been catching flounder at the ODU

wreck, between the 2nd and 3rd islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Spadefish have been landed sporadically in the same area. While none have been brought in, staff has heard reports of cobia sightings along the bridge as well. Croaker are keeping anglers occupied throughout the area.

At the Sunset Boating Center, anglers have reported numerous small croaker in the area. Spanish mackerel and flounder have been hooked near Cape Henry.

Massive cobia, flounder, and numerous citations were reported from Salt Pond's Marina this week. A 78-pound, 6-ounce cobia was landed from the MISS SUSIE at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel on the 25th, following a 57-pound, 60-inch cobia landed from the same area on the 24th. Two flounder citations came in from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel on the 26th, (8 pounds, 29 inches and 7 pounds, 4 ounces, 27 inches), and on the 27th, two red drum release citations, both 47 inches, were brought in from the same area.

Staff at York River Fishing Center reports that flounder has really picked up in the area. Many are able to find their limits of keepers. Anglers are also catching some cobia in the area. Spot and Croaker can be found in the river and off of Gloucester Point Pier where the occasional flounder is hooked as well. Spanish mackerel are biting at the mouth of the York River.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

The long Independence Day weekend arrives with numerous species to target. Bluefin tuna are being caught on the inshore lumps like the Hot Dog and 26-Mile Hill. They are also being caught on the Fingers along with dolphin, king mackerel and some yellowfin tuna. Dolphin and marlin are available in the area southeast of the Cigar. Tilefish and grouper are being caught by bottom bouncers in the area of the Norfolk Canyon. Black sea bass, some tautog, and triggerfish are biting on the inshore wrecks. Some of these same wrecks like the Gulf Hustler, Ricks, and Hanks, are good locations to encounter some big amberjack. The Chesapeake Light Tower is another amberjack spot but for a sure bet, make the long run down to the South Towers. Spadefish can be caught on these and other wrecks, at the Tower Reef, the Chesapeake Light Tower, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and at the Cell. Black drum are a possibility around the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, especially at the 2nd and 3rd islands. Large red drum are still being caught by anglers fishing the Inner Middle Ground area at night. Sheepshead are on the pilings of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel with fiddler crabs being a preferred bait. Spanish mackerel are being caught along the oceanfront and in the lower bay up to Windmill Point. Numerous small bluefish are mixed in with the Spanish. Cobia anglers are catching fish while sitting on chum slicks at York Spit, Bluefish Rock, and the Inner Middle Grounds. Some large flounder are at the Cell/Buoy 42 areas but most of the larger fish are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and at Back River Reef by anglers fishing with live spot. A few speckled trout are being caught in the rivers of the Mobjack Bay and in the bayside creeks of the Eastern Shore. Croaker are biting everywhere.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

The Independence Day weekend is not the only event causing fireworks. The saltwater action along the Mid Atlantic coast is also going off. The flounder action is explosive this week, with heavy flounder tipping the scales daily at local tackle shops. Anglers are pounding the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and other lower bay structures, mostly with live bait and jigs. Live spot is working

well near structure, while 2-ounce jig heads adorned with shad-style plastics are a good choice for jigging around the piling bases. Strip baits are also producing some decent fish. Gerald George of Suffolk scored with a 7-pound, 1-ounce doormat near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel on bluefish strips.

The Spanish mackerel scene is another hot topic. Folks trolling the lower Bay, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and the ocean shorelines are finding limits of Spanish mackerel and a smattering of Taylor bluefish. Small silver and gold spoons weighted with in-line sinkers will do the trick in anywhere from 18 to 30 feet of water. King mackerel are next. Anglers continue to report sightings of kings skying and crashing on bait inshore, while small kings are biting trolled baits on the inshore lumps.

Tautog are also back in the picture, with anglers beginning to show some interest. Rob Collins of Norfolk was rewarded for his togging efforts with a nice 11-pound, 4-ounce fish he hooked on a lower bay structure using fiddler crabs. Sheepshead are still not on fire, but more frequent catches along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel are beginning to show promise. A good showing of triggers in the same area are also keeping things interesting.

Spadefish action is still sketchy most everywhere, with small to medium-sized fish the norm right now. Some bigger spades are lurking around the High Rise span and the 4th island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, if you can slow them down. This season's trophy spade catches are behind last year's entries, with no signs of catching up.

Although red drum are becoming more elusive, a few big reds are still taking baits intended for cobia. Black drum continue to bite around the artificial islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, where anglers are hooking an occasional fish while casting grubs and shads.

Cobia seem to be taking a break right now, with catches slowing even more this week. Frustrated anglers are reporting fish free swimming on the surface, but refusing any offerings. Chummers are also reporting slow action this week.

Puppy drum are active lately, with the best reports coming from the lower bay inlets and the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. The Virginia Beach Fishing Center reports that spot showed up within Rudee Inlet, with the average size around $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound. Croaker are most everywhere right now, with some fish pushing 1.5 pounds near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Cell. The flurry of anglers rushing into Oyster is an indication that the hardheads (croaker) made their debut in their back waters, where tarpon sightings should also come soon.

Amberjack are a good bet at the Southern Towers and some offshore wrecks such as the Triangles, and the Ricks and Hanks wrecks. Live bait is working well, while jigs are also a good alternative bait. Deep droppers are finding plenty of nice tilefish, wreckfish, and blackbelly rosefish, which can offer a break during a slow offshore trolling day.

The offshore season is offering some good options. Billfish are making a good showing near the Triple 0's and the Cigar, where a few sailfish releases and grand slams made for a great week.

Although yellowfin tuna are scarce, bluefin tuna ranging from 50 to over 100 pounds are biting on the inshore lumps, with the Hot Dog and 26-Mile Hill providing the best action. Some big gaffer dolphin over 50 pounds are also available. The new state leading mahi was landed this week by Burt Whitt of Norfolk while fishing on the NORFOLK BLUE in 100 fathoms and has a story with a twist.

The fish slipped into the water while at the dock, until retrieved by a helpful diver to then land safely on the scales. The final weight of the fish was 58 pounds, 6 ounces.

Virginia Middle Bay

Smith Point Marina has seen some good action with bluefish lately. Trolling and chumming has produced good numbers. Striped bass are still being caught (although you now have to throw them back in Virginia waters) as well as keeper flounder, croaker and spot.

Locklies Marina has seen good numbers of pan-sized spot. Some keeper flounder, nice-sized croaker, and bluefish around the bridges are being caught as well. Garrett's Marina reports that croaker and catfish are coming through their area.

Capt. Jim Thompson reports croaker have dropped off to almost a trickle in the middle bay and on the Eastern Shore. It was a very short season for the big croaker this year. Some small croaker remain in hot spots. Cobia were taken at the Range light on the Eastern Shore as well a Red drum. In the Rappahannock, spot are in full swing but are small. The fishing spots include the Spike and in Butlers Hole, where sea mullet and trout could be found. In the Piankatank River, small spot were the main catch. Off of Gwynn's Island, small to medium-sized croaker could be had, as well as dog shark.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Medium Spot have started biting at the Spike and at Butlers Hole with small to medium croaker mixed in. Bluefish and Spanish mackerel are available along Windmill Bar. Although there were two citations caught near Buoy 42 this week, flounder fishing at Buoy 42 and in the Cell area has been slow with few keepers. Two other flounder citations came from Cape Charles—a single lucky angler caught both. Spadefish are available at the Cell and at Wolftrap Light. The small fish have shown up a bit early so large fish are harder to catch with all the bait steelers mixed in. We weighed in one citation from the Cell through Sunday. Speckled Trout fishing has slowed.

Virginia Beach

Staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center reports great fishing for the week. The offshore boats are doing great with dolphin, king mackerel, and bluefin tuna ranging from 80 to 100 pounds. The inshore boats are also seeing great catches of spadefish, Spanish mackerel, and bluefish. Head boats are out for black sea bass and croaker. In the inlet, spot are still popular, as is flounder, though there is only a 10 % keeper rate.

Paula at Fisherman's Wharf Marina has seen some good catches of bluefin tuna and king mackerel coming in from 26-Mile Hill. A few gaffer dolphin have been caught in the Norfolk Canyon and in the Cigar area. Inshore, tautog and sheepshead are being hooked at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Bluefish and Spanish mackerel are also providing good catches. Cobia have been found around the Sandbridge area.

Virginia Piers

Staff at the Ocean View Pier reports nice fishing during the day, and even better after night fall. Catches include croaker, flounder, Spanish mackerel and bluefish.

Staff at the Lynnhaven Pier has seen nice spot, roundhead, croaker, and flounder. Night anglers are seeing a little bit better fishing than those fishing during the day. Several decent catches have come in over the week.

The Virginia Beach Pier reports catches of striped bass and juvenile red drum, with a few keeper-sized flounder thrown in. Spanish mackerel, roundheads and bluefish continue their presence in the area.

Outer Banks, NC

Offshore fishing in the Nags Head region has only included a few dolphin, yellowfin tuna and wahoo. The bright side has been the consistency of the billfish bite, which has been moderate to good, and includes blue marlin, white marlin and sailfish. At least one grand slam (catching a blue marlin, white marlin and a sailfish in one trip) was reported out of Pirates Cove Marina. People fishing the mid-range artificial reefs had luck with triggerfish, black sea bass, amberjack and striped bass. Inshore action has also slowed down, and the best production is coming in the early morning hours for speckled trout and red drum. These species are found in their normal summertime haunts, the flats around marsh islands and in the surf. The pier action has been almost exclusively bluefish. Blitzes were likely to come at any moment of the day with Gotcha plugs being the preferred bait. The die-hard bottom fishermen could find a few spot or sea mullet when the wind dirtied up the water.

Offshore fishing out of Oregon Inlet slowed down with the wind from storms and cold fronts keeping a lot of anglers in port. On Saturday, when the weather was better, a good number of sailfish were reported, with a few blue marlin mixed in. A good number of dolphin were found by at least one boat. People trolling the inshore areas were able to catch bluefish and Spanish mackerel.

The surf fishing South of Oregon Inlet has been very slow due to the strong south west winds. Only a few reports came in of sea mullet at ramp 43, black drum at the jetties, and bluefish hitting spoons. Sound side fishing had flounder and bluefish on the menu. Offshore fishing out of Hatteras Inlet was blown out for the weekend.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.



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Four Dozen NY Subway Cars Added to Blackfish Bank Reef

CHINCOTEAGUE, VA --- The Virginia Marine Resources Commission sank almost four dozen donated New York City subway cars off the coast here in a daylong operation Thursday to expand an artificial fishing reef.

"These surplus subway cars are fish magnets that provide shelter for a variety of marine species and attract prized gamefish," said VMRC Commissioner Steven G. Bowman. "We're very pleased to be able to help our recreational anglers with this reef expansion and very grateful to the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority."

Since the early 1970s, VMRC has worked to establish an extensive artificial reef system throughout the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's coastal waters. The agency now has 23 reefs, many of them quite large, formed from old concrete pipes, demolished bridges, the remains of piers and a lighthouse, or surplus equipment such as subway cars, armored personnel carriers or old Liberty-class ships. The material duplicates the natural nooks and anomalies of the water bottom, providing habitat for marine life and aiding in the development of a food web that attracts large predator fish.

Funds for the maintenance and expansion of the reef program are augmented by money collected from the sale of saltwater fishing licenses, in keeping with a VMRC philosophy that license fees should be used to benefit anglers.

In Thursday's reef expansion operation, 44 stainless steel subway cars donated by New York City's Metropolitan Transit Authority were shoved over the side of a barge in a grid pattern to expand Blackfish Bank Reef.

That reef is located off the coast of Chincoteague and is 5.8 miles southeast of Assateague in Maryland. The subway cars now rest in 65 feet of water near 50 New York City "Redbird" subway cars sunk in November 2003 and 40 Army-donated surplus armored personnel carriers deployed in 1998. The cars each were 50 feet long and their combined weight was 17 tons.

"We have an artificial reef system that is the envy of other coastal states and the fishing here is tremendous," said Commissioner Bowman. "Come try it. You won't be disappointed."

The exact locations of each reef, and their composition, can be found at http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/reef_map/reef_map.shtm. Specifics on Blackfish Bank Reef can be found at http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/vsrfd/blackfish_reef.shtm.

Get Hooked!

Report at

www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.












A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's "Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" website. The page has a blue header with the commission's name and logo. Below the header, there's a section titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" with a "Welcome Jgrist," message. A prominent message states "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" and explains that they are collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. Another section titled "New 2008 Tautog Regs" lists fishing regulations: Closed Season (May 1 through June 24), Minimum Size Limit (14 inches), and Possession Limit (4 per person). A statistics box on the left shows data for June 16, 2008: Members: 1,457, Trips: 295, and Catches: 3,941. At the bottom, there are "Related Links" and "Help" sections.

**THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.**

You catch it, you fillet it,
**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.**



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TAUTOG	
TILEFISH		GROUPE	
KING MACKEREL		SPANISH MACKEREL	
BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a **ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

Bell Isle Marine (Hampton)

Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)

Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)

Wachapreague Marina

Morningstar Marina – Gwynn's Island (formerly known as the Gwynn's Island Boatel)

Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)

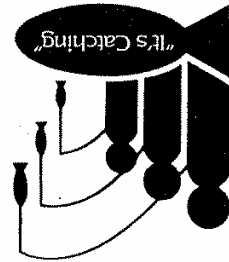
Website: http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec_assessment/index.shtm

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